



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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THE "P.R." LETTER BAG.

[The Editor is not responsible for the opinions of correspondents.]

DEAR EDITOR,—It might interest some of your readers to hear one of the plans adopted by German teachers for teaching spelling to young pupils.

The children are told to write down ten words, each of which must contain two given letters, such as ie, ei, oo, tt, au, and so on. This gives the pupil good mental exercise, and impresses each word firmly in his mind. Spelling is, unfortunately, one of the most trying subjects to our little students, and this suggestion, I trust, may be of some little assistance.

F. A. G.

DEAR EDITOR,—One of the the most difficult tasks for a parent is to gauge the mental development of his children. My husband and I had often talked over this problem, when we one day found a passage in the Life of Mirabeau which seemed to us to give one method of testing it.

When Mirabeau was five years old his tutor asked him to write a letter to himself, telling himself what was right to do in the world, and what he must avoid doing. We at once decided that each of our children should be asked to do the same separately, only that in their case each child was told to suppose that an Indian was in the room, and that he or she must tell him what was right and what was wrong, and also that the answer be dictated.

The result was very gratifying. Each child quickly grasped the idea of what was required of him, and brought out their views of good and bad behaviour with great facility.

One mite of three said, among other things, "Be good. Stroke animals, or they'll bite you. Love God and the angels. Don't cry when you go to bed." A boy of five began with: "Do not knock off the flowers' heads with a stick when you go through the fields. Love animals. Be obedient. Love God, and then father and mother." A little girl of eight said: "Do not think yourself better than other people when you're not"—and so on.

We have entered the answers in a book, and in a year's time shall again ask the same questions, and by this means obtain some idea of the development of their minds and moral feelings. I heartily recommend this experiment to other parents.

M. S.

DEAR EDITOR,—An experiment has been lately tried in a National Infant School in the country to try and discover how much artistic power could be brought out of the hands of little ones of five and six years of age. Seven weeks before the examination a few ladies interested in home arts began to teach basket-making and modelling alternately an hour and a half a week to thirty-five pupils. Both teachers and scholars thoroughly enjoyed this lesson, and as the former were most particular that all finished work must be as perfect as possible, the little hands soon acquired a dexterity and precision that was surprising. The Inspector's report is as follows: "The modelling in terra cotta is the most encouraging attempt which I have met with to introduce a sense of form into infant schools." Will not, therefore, some elder daughters be induced to do likewise, and also help to train little ones in infant schools? And will not mothers be encouraged to help their children in the nurseries to learn form and exactness by the children's most fascinating art—modelling?

E. P. S.

DEAR EDITOR,—Will any of your readers say what course they would pursue to improve the dormant intellect of a child of ten who is too idle, mentally and physically, to trouble even to listen or think, consequently to remember anything he is taught, without the fear of some punishment or the offer of some reward? The reader must realise he has been for at least two years at good schools, where he absolutely learned nothing, and is now under private tuition, beginning, for the first time, to make any knowledge his own. He has as yet neither habit of attention, nor memory, nor accuracy.

MATER.

DEAR EDITOR,—*The Little Gardeners*, an allegory, published by Jarrold, is a very sweet little book, teaching moral lessons to children which "J. P." might find useful. I should be very glad to know of a book giving the simple old-fashioned names of the flowers, without the regular technical study of botany. I should be so glad to know which of the books recommended to "J. P." is the simplest.

M. A. R.

[Anne Pratt's books, two vols., 6s. a vol., would suit "M. A. R.," but probably other answers will be sent during the month.—ED.]

A letter has been received from a correspondent asking whether children's letters should be supervised by their parents or not. She mentions the case of an only daughter of fifteen, who writes weekly diaries to a young friend, and receives the same from her. They are obviously injuring the girl's character, but her mother is afraid of insisting on seeing all the letters lest it should lead to a clandestine correspondence. Would other mothers who have had a similar experience kindly suggest any course of treatment that might be adopted?